

tonight, the streets are ours

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/28924092) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/28924092>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Video Blogging RPF
Relationship:	Karl Jacobs/Sapnap, Clay Dream/GeorgeNotFound (Video Blogging RPF), Clay Dream & GeorgeNotFound & Sapnap (Video Blogging RPF)
Character:	Sapnap (Video Blogging RPF), Karl Jacobs, Clay Dream (Video Blogging RPF), GeorgeNotFound (Video Blogging RPF)
Additional Tags:	Implied/Referenced Underage Drinking, Drunkenness, Feel-good, Stealing your boys pop tarts at 4 AM things, that's not a euphemism aha, This is some MAJOR feel-good slice of life shit. Don't read if u want plot, No Plot/Plotless, Comfort, Kissing in the Rain, Slice of Life, Swearing, lots of food imagery, Confessions, Asking Out
Language:	English
Collections:	one shots, MCYT, karlnap fanfics (mcyt), MMR
Stats:	Published: 2021-01-22 Words: 7203

tonight, the streets are ours

by [glittering_ant](#)

Summary

Sapnap has no shame berating his best friends for being stupid at relationships. Then again, he's wanted Karl for six months, so maybe it's dumb of him to criticise them.

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(Requested<3)

Notes

To clarify, this is an alternate POV that was requested and includes scenes from [Hot Sugar](#). I'm sorry if you guys are sick of things related to that fic by now. You can read this separate from it if you want to. :)

Thank u for clicking! Enjoy! (Sorry this is so late, and I hope there aren't errors,,,I'll read it over again later on)

Revised 24/1/21, so should be clear of errors now. Those are so cringe. Also!.. fixed up some of the more.,,ugly sentences. aha<3

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Sapnap stood shoulder to shoulder with Karl Jacobs, watching as the backs of his friends disappeared between billows of people.

“Wonder why they were in such a rush.” Sapnap commented right as he lost sight completely, taking a swig of his orangish punch.

Maybe if he were sober, the grip that Dream had on George’s elbow as he tugged the smaller man rather urgently towards the exit would carry greater significance to him. As it were, Sapnap just looked on uncomprehendingly as the cogs clinked sluggishly in his brain.

He saw Karl glance over to him in his peripherals.

“It’s past George’s bedtime.” The blond offered lightheartedly, though his accompanying hum was thoughtful.

Karl was still completely sober, blue can of Pepsi in his hand, and Sapnap was mildly thrown off by how normal he sounded. Compared to everyone else around them, the difference was quite conspicuous.

“Dude, George is the biggest fucking lightweight, but even I never see them leave this early. *Dream* sure looked like he had somewhere to be.” Sapnap snickered to himself.

Karl shrugged, “I honestly wasn’t paying that close attention. Anyway, should we rejoin the Jenga game?”

Sapnap felt a grin take over his face at the reminder of their abandoned game of drunk (well, drunk for everyone save Karl) Jenga, and eagerly grabbed his friend’s elbow to drag them back to the circle.

Sapnap was holding onto Karl's shoulder at half past 2 AM as they finally dragged themselves away from the party. The original crowd had thinned down exponentially, but there was still a steady mass of people lingering and chatting. Not really the sort of social group either Sapnap or Karl felt like hanging around with, so they mutually decided to call it a night.

As they were finding their way back to Karl's car, parked somewhere up the street, Sapnap caught his friend's tiny inhale before he spoke up.

"I'm hungry," Karl began. "Wanna make a quick 4 AM fast food run?"

They passed under a streetlight as Sapnap turned to regard him, harsh white cascading across the blond's cheeks and framing the grin dividing his features. Sapnap felt his chest tug and then lighten, and beamed back.

"Fuck yeah." He paused, checking his phone, and letting out a chuckle. "It's not even close to 4 AM, but it's fuckin' dead out here, and I'm awesomely blitzed; therefore, it's legally the perfect time for a fast food run."

Karl cackled, high-pitched and infectious, spreading warmth throughout Sapnap.

"*True.*"

They trekked it back to Karl's old Civic with renewed pep, surrounding temperament light and carefree. The latter unlocked the car once they were close enough, and Sapnap stumbled as he climbed in, needing to take a moment on the edge of the passenger seat until his head stopped spinning—courtesy of his jerky movements. Karl waited patiently for him to click his seatbelt in before putting the car into drive and pulling away.

"You wanna Google the closest 24-hour McDonald's? Or—is that alright? 'Cause we can totally go somewhere else if you'd like." Karl rambled slightly, voice pitching in question as he checked both ways at a stop sign.

Sapnap was already opening Maps and punching "McDonald's" into the search bar.

“No way, dude, that shit hits different after 3 AM, I’d never deny myself that.”

Karl giggled raucously beside him as Sapnap’s phone started robotically calling out directions to them.

They drove for about three minutes before the residential streets thinned-out. There were scarcely any other cars around, even as they pulled onto the main road.

The siren-red lights of a McDonald’s sign swam steadily into view not long later, and Karl eased the brakes as they approached, turning into the driveway entry.

“Alright, you know what you want?” The blond asked, upturning the wheel rather haphazardly and slowing to a stop somewhere amongst the line of vacant parking spots.

Sapnap shrugged and stretched his legs in the cramped footwell.

“Not sure, honestly. I think I’d have to see all that fake ass food in person before I could make a decision.”

Karl nodded listlessly, “Wanna just go in, then?” He offered in compromise.

Sapnap hummed thoughtfully and agreed, Karl killing the ignition. They climbed out of the vehicle at the same time—though Sapnap a little less gracefully than his friend—and Karl locked it behind them.

Now out in the open, Sapnap took the opportunity to stretch his arms above his head, hearing his joints crack.

“Alright, let’s get this bread.” He sighed comfortably as his arms flopped back down, leisurely plodding around to Karl’s side as the two of them strolled through the empty lot together.

As the light from inside the restaurant got closer and crowded more of Sapnap’s vision, he groaned

and raised a hand to scrub his eyes, trying to force some sobriety into him—if not for the sake of eating, then at least for *some* semblance of dignity.

He heard Karl's bell-like giggle beside him again and fought down a smile.

"Alright, I hear you Jacobs, quit it."

Karl stifled his humour behind his broad smile, and Sapnap elbowed him half-heartedly as they walked past the threshold, though it didn't have much of an affect. Karl's chest shook with silent wheezing, and he brought an arm around Sapnap to steady the brunet against his side.

It didn't work perfectly, since their shoulders came to about the same height, but Sapnap was more than happy to embrace the contact and lean into the other man.

Karl straightened up as best he could against Sapnap's weight and diverted his attention to the screens above the registers. The easy moment softly ebbed and flowed as they began reading out the menu to each other, deliberating.

Turns out that deciding, for Sapnap at least, didn't take too long. He supposed that being somewhat drunk, his standards had lowered, and he realised that his ability to make distinctions was inhibited enough that it really didn't matter.

Karl spent somewhat longer staring at the menu boards, very verbosely grappling with the dilemma of "nuggets" or "burger".

(He eventually settled for nuggets, but only because the cashier started staring them down with enough underlying intensity that he stress-picked at random.)

They ordered and paid, and their numbers were called only shortly thereafter, being the only other customers in-store.

They'd just stuffed straws into their drinks, and were about to consider staying inside to eat, when a rowdy group of similar-aged patrons stumbled through the door; apparently lacking self-awareness, if their volume levels were anything to go by. Considering the duo had just completely filled up their "loud and college-aged company" quota for the night, they wisely beelined for the exit.

Sapnap threw the door open and was hit with cool night air that felt deceptively fresh after being in the greasy foyer of a McDonald's for so long.

Falling back into step with Karl, Sapnap stared at their feet and inhaled deeply, enjoying the sweetish taste of the air filling his lungs. A tardy smile tugged on his face, as the passive calmness of the night returned to wash their surroundings in deep blues.

Side-by-side with one of his best friends, fast food bags in hand, and head buzzing pleasantly, Sapnap thought life in that moment was pretty damn alright.

As he shifted his focus over to Karl, he wondered if the blond felt the same thing.

Karl caught his gaze and donned a winning smile, tilting his head in quiet consideration.

“Wanna sit outside? It’s nice out here.” The blond suggested.

Sapnap spared a glance up at the sky, hazy with light pollution, but otherwise remarkably endearing. Leaves rustled high above their heads, and Sapnap returned his attention back to Karl. He watched quietly as the dark blond tresses curling over his friend’s forehead were ruffled by the breeze. The sound of cars was sparse and irregular. Strangely enough, it felt as though someone had pressed pause on the world.

“Yeah.” He responded, a little late, trying hard not to smile. He very abruptly realised that he had nothing substantial to say, yet somehow, he liked it better that way.

They meandered their way back to the car, but didn’t climb inside yet.

Instead, they sat down on the thin grassy strip between the car park and the hedgerow, unpacking their meals and laying them across the lawn between them.

They ate in relative silence for the first few minutes, listening only to the sound of wrappers crinkling and the occasional car engine down the block.

Sapnap was busy lining the inside of his double quarter pounder with shoestring fries when Karl cleared his throat.

“What are you... why are you putting fries on your burger?”

Sapnap let out a surprised laugh, wiping gritty salt off his fingers to grab at his discarded top bun, realigning it over the patty that was now covered in a delicious layer of deep-fried potato.

“Dude, do you not put your fries in your burger? You’re missing out. Try it.” He gestured ambiguously at his meal.

Karl looked perplexed.

“No? I don’t think I’ve ever seen someone do that. This is not the first time we’ve had cheap, American fast food together, how have I never seen you do that before?”

Sapnap shrugged.

“I dunno, I do it all the time. It works better with the thin fries though.” He explained importantly, and held one up for emphasis, pinching it between his thumb and forefinger.

Karl still maintained an air as though he wasn’t quite able to put that information past him, staring intensely at his chicken nuggets.

Sapnap snickered loudly, a little obnoxious in the quiet night, as he watched Karl’s weirdly disproportionate reaction. With indolent hands, he picked up his burger and offered it towards his friend.

“Here, nimrod. Try it. It’s actually really fucking good.”

Karl’s eyes zoned in on the food as it was held out to him, and, painfully slowly, raised a hand, fingers covering Sapnap’s own to steady them in place as he took a cautious bite. He pulled away and chewed, contemplation etching his features.

He looked a little ridiculous, and Sapnap had to hold back another incredulous laugh. He settled for a grin. Karl's hand was still on his.

"Okay..." The blond started, working to swallow his mouthful before he continued. "Not bad. I approve. I don't think it's quite life-changing enough for me to actually go through with the extra effort of doing it each time, though."

Finally, he took his hand away, bringing it to his lips and sucking a smudge of stray sauce off his thumb. It took Sapnap a long time to drag his eyes away.

"I'm pretty sure I'd get bored if I had it every time. If I'm eating fries and a burger, there's a reason they're packed separately. They taste good enough on their own." Karl continued, unseeing to Sapnap's barefacedness.

Sapnap blinked out of his daze, scrutinising Karl's hands as the older male returned to scooping sweet and sour sauce with his nuggets.

Snorting, he tightened his grip around his own food and brought it to his mouth, taking an enormous bite. Karl noticed and raised his eyebrows, eyes creasing at the corners as his surprised smile re-shaped the skin.

"Wow that was a massive bite, holy cow Sapnap. Luckily we aren't technically at a table right now, your manners are atrocious."

Sapnap nodded dramatically while he chewed, hoping to convey his best *sure are* attitude.

They volley-balled back and forth with ample conversation between mouthfuls of greasy, artery-clogging food, and Sapnap felt the mist in his head lift with each passing word and savoury bite.

Soon, they had only their drinks left, so they decided to bin the rest and take the half-full cups with them in the car. The pale green backdrop of the dashboard clock highlighted the tiny grey numbers of 3:23 AM, when they finally left the McDonald's car park and began the short drive back to Karl's house.

Karl's house lay in the depths of the suburbs, and being the middle of the night, it was dark and disproportionately quiet—yet pleasant. Unlike Sapnap, Karl had only one roommate, who was presumably either asleep or absent, because the inside of the property turned out to be just as peaceful as the outside.

The front door closed with a click behind them. Karl kicked off his shoes into a line of worn-looking trainers, and Sapnap did the same, following closely behind the blond as they passed the threshold into the kitchen. The tiles were freezing under Sapnap's feet, cold permeating unpleasantly through the cotton of his socks, and he crossed one foot over the other in a feeble attempt to retain some body heat.

Karl shuffled over to the pantry, coke still in hand, and yanked open the door to (quite literally) single-handedly sift through shelves of food.

Sapnap smiled and couldn't help huffing with surprised laughter.

"Are you serious? We *just* ate, doofus." He fought from rolling his eyes, lifting his drink up to take several long sips.

Karl elicited a noise of avid protest, but didn't make any attempts to move away from his task.

"Okay, shut up." Karl's muffled voice sounded from behind the frosted glass door, and Sapnap inadvertently laughed again, chewing on the end of his straw as it rested lightly between his lips.

Karl was evidently finding it a struggle to navigate the contents of his pantry with only one available hand, and stuck his drink-bearing arm out behind him at an awkward angle to keep it out of the way. The whole shift was accompanied by a small noise of frustration.

Sapnap reluctantly uncrossed his feet and braved the cold to step forward, reaching for Karl's outstretched arm.

"Here," he supplied, before snatching the offending item from his idiot companion, holding it parallel to his own. "Use both hands, nimrod. I don't know why you didn't put it down first." He tried to sound scolding, but his smile was blatant, and his voice came out softer than he'd been aiming for.

Karl gave another incoherent response, briefly plunging further into the pantry, before yanking his arm out with a full-body movement, creating a small avalanche of chip packets and other food items that hit the floor noisily. Karl was laughing to himself, and Sapnap got a glimpse of the thing that had caused such an elaborate struggle clutched in Karl's hand; a box of pop tarts.

Sapnap raised an eyebrow. "Seriously?"

Karl carelessly stuffed the fallen boxes back into the cupboard. "I swear to god, if we hadn't had pop tarts after all that, I would have been so upset. Quackity keeps hiding them from me." He shook his head solemnly. Sapnap snorted at the shameless dramatics.

"That's because you go through an ungodly amount, dude."

Karl swung the door shut and shuffled over to the toaster, extracting two pop tarts from the box.

"They're my kryptonite, and I'm okay with it." Karl admitted, dropping them into the toaster and pushing down on the lever aggressively.

Unhurriedly, Sapnap crossed the room to join Karl in congregating by the toaster, leaning a hip on the counter and watching the wires inside glow hotter. The silence of the house clogged his ears and buzzed static in his brain. Sapnap could tell that he was on the precipice of clear-mindedness, wordlessly noting that his last drink was well over an hour ago.

He felt a tug on the corner of his mind, and glanced up to see Karl spectating him quietly, the soft edges of his eyes woven delicately into his mellowed expression. Sapnap stared back, blinking fog from his eyes and tracing his gaze along the dark lashes of Karl's bottom eyelid; the sweeping plane of his cheek directly underneath it; the bridge of his nose, swathed in freckles. Sapnap blamed the way his body involuntarily swayed towards the other on his inebriation, ignoring the fact that his head felt dangerously near to lucidity.

He hadn't realised how close they were until the toaster re-instilled itself in the exchange and Karl leaned away, the tinny sounds of springs releasing cutting through the silence and pulling Karl Jacobs' attention with them.

After the blond had turned away and was busying himself carefully picking the tarts out without getting burnt, Sapnap felt his face flood with heat and mild embarrassment, fingers gripping the cups in his hands harder. He would never admit that he openly scowled at a kitchen appliance once

his friend's back was turned.

The soft, flat sound of a pop tart hitting ceramic reverberated around Sapnap's head and forcefully grounded him. He risked a final glance up at Karl through the corner of his eye, and then the moment was over.

Sapnap wasn't sure if he was glad or sorely disappointed when the tension reverted itself to the way it had been a few minutes prior.

Karl's deft fingers curled around a pop tart and broke it into two pieces.

Honestly, Sapnap wasn't that hungry, he'd been having plenty to eat all evening, but when Karl took a languid step towards the middle of the kitchen, foot swinging mindlessly in front of him, Sapnap couldn't help ditching their drinks on the counter to nab the half of his pop tart left foolishly abandoned on his plate.

Karl noticed immediately and scrambled to save it, but Sapnap hurriedly turned out of his reach and stuffed the crisp pastry in his mouth. The inside was a little on this side of too hot for his tastes, but Karl's exaggerated reaction of devastation afterwards made him keep chewing, self-satisfied smile slipping on his face.

“*Sapnap!*” The blond exclaimed. “You would!”

While Sapnap stood laughing unattractively around his mouthful, Karl grabbed the plate and crowded it against his body, arm coiled protectively around his remaining pop tart. Something warm and pleasant dripped down Sapnap's throat and settled in his belly like the sand at the bottom of an hourglass, pointed and innocuous.

After a bit of bickering, they assumed the roles that Sapnap had grown familiar with, after nearly nine months of friendship—tiptoeing through the corridors, chucking harsh whispers back and forth the entire way and half-heartedly quelling the laughter that threatened to be too loud in the silence. Sapnap's eyes were carried to the backs of Karl's heels as they ascended the stairs, absentmindedly tracing an irregular trail of freckles up his calves.

When they stopped by Karl's door and the blond's hand reached for the doorknob, Sapnap's eyes followed his friend's wrist, observing the tendons that pulled taut beneath his worn, plaited bracelet.

They filed into the room, and neither of them batted an eye as Karl wordlessly handed him clean sweatpants, then ducked across the hall into the bathroom.

Sapnap begrudgingly refused himself the laziness of going straight to sleep, despite how appealing it seemed. With a sigh, he trudged after the blond.

He technically didn't have the excuse of drunkenness anymore, so the least he could do was go through the frankly minimalistic effort of washing his mouth out, seeing as he didn't have a toothbrush.

Karl looked unsurprised to see the brunet plodding into the small room while he cleaned his teeth, facing the mirror. He didn't say anything, mostly courtesy of the toothbrush in his mouth, but Sapnap could feel the amused stare digging into his own back as he scavenged for mouthwash in the cupboard.

When returned to Karl's room, it was in complete, comfortable silence.

It seemed as if they were both pushing the boundary of "too tired to talk", but Sapnap had passed out drunk in Karl's bed countless times before. Nothing really needed to be said.

Sapnap collapsed onto the bed immediately, memorising the last grainy silhouette of Karl that he could make out in the dark, before his eyelashes blurred the image and he was knocked out by sleep.

☽ ★ ☽

Light bloomed beneath Sapnap's eyelids late the next morning.

Or at least, he assumed it was late, because it wasn't nearly as blinding and white-hot as the early morning sun.

He cracked open an eye hesitantly against the intrusion, seeking out the dim red light of the digital

clock on Karl's nightstand. If he was quick about it, he could check the time without waking up too much, and immediately fall back asleep if need be.

The softly glowing display read 12:05 PM. Definitely not late enough. Sapnap shoved his face into the mattress underneath his pillow with a groan, tugging it further over his head. He felt himself drifting gently back towards sleep for a couple minutes, thoughts delirious and nonsensical as they verged on dreams.

Just as he was about to pass out entirely, Sapnap was jolted awake by an impact to his shoulder, startled so badly that his whole body spasmed. He yanked the pillow off of his head and stared into the eyes of his aggressor.

“What the *hell*, dude.” Judging by the petulant note of affrontement in his voice, Sapnap had a feeling he probably looked a bit ridiculous from the other’s perspective.

As he’d suspected, Karl laughed raucously, eyes wide despite it being what Sapnap would still consider early.

“*Why*.” The brunet complained, throwing an arm over his eyes.

Karl huffed, grin in his voice. “I knew you were awake.”

“No shit, I am *now*.”

“No,” the blond barked a laugh. “I mean before that. I’m getting hungry, I was about to get up and make food, but you moved, so... breakfast with the homies?” Karl’s tone picked up, spine straightening as he peered eagerly at the brunet.

Well, fuck. How could Sapnap say “no” to that shit?

Sapnap suppressed a tortured groan and swiped at his eyes with his fingers, narrowly avoiding poking them out of their sockets.

“Urgh.” He grumbled unintelligibly, “Fine. I guess I’m not going back to sleep now.”

With a heavy, satisfying sigh, Sapnap hauled himself into a lazy sitting position. His eyes were still a little bleary, and moving upright made him remember how unpleasant the morning-after fuzz of alcohol was in his brain. It wasn't so bad now, but he could feel it on the brink of a dehydration headache.

He turned to Karl. "Can I grab some aspirin?"

Karl nodded understandingly. "Course. You can head downstairs already, I'll grab it."

With that, he left and disappeared across the hallway. Sapnap stared at the rough carpet on the floor beside the bed, before throwing his legs over the edge, and pressing his feet into the woollen material.

He walked with heavy footsteps out of his friend's quaint bedroom, playing his usual game of "count how many candles Karl has at the moment" on his path to the kitchen. Today's tally was a total of nine—two more than the score from his last visit, only a week ago.

True to his word, Karl appeared at the bottom of the stairs only a moment after Sapnap had entered the kitchen.

Karl fussed about, getting Sapnap a glass of water and punching out two pills from the packet in his hands. Meanwhile, the brunet tugged on the door to the fridge, throwing it wide open and scanning its contents. He and Karl had worked out a truce pretty early on about raiding the other's food stocks without asking—mainly because Sapnap had no qualms doing it to anyone and everyone regardless.

Sapnap heard shuffling behind him as Karl approached, and smiled to himself at the unmistakable sound of a yawn.

"Breakfast burritos?" He asked over his shoulder.

That drew an indignant grunt from Karl, as Sapnap already began pulling tortillas, eggs and ham out of the fridge. He could easily picture the resigned look of disdain on his friend's face at the comment. There was the clear, reverberating ring of a glass connecting with the hard countertop, and then a grating clatter of pots and pans as Karl rummaged through a drawer.

“They’re really not burritos. They’re just wraps. I can’t believe I’m still having to repeat myself.” Karl enunciated, and Sapnap glanced behind him to see the blond brandishing a sandwich press.

Turning back to the fridge, Sapnap quickly plucked the dark bottle of barbecue sauce off the top shelf and spun around, elbowing the heavy door shut.

“*Yeah*, but breakfast *wraps* sounds fucking scuffed. I’m not calling them that. Breakfast *burritos*,” he reiterated. “It’s like, alliteration and shit.”

Karl shook his head disagreeably, but otherwise didn’t refute him, squeezing in next to Sapnap by the counter, and setting up the sandwich press.

“Alright, Snapmap. Let’s just make these boys already, ‘cause I just got *super* hungry in the last four seconds.” Karl explained dourly, eyeing the packet of ham, and Sapnap shook his head congenially.

“For *sure* dude. Anything for you.” Sapnap said, semi-seriously. “Do your shoes need shining?” He snickered to himself, wrestling with the grin that threatened to overthrow his face.

Glancing over at Karl revealed him to be tussling with the same problem, mouth wobbling from the effort of not letting himself react. Sapnap watched it forlornly until Karl caught him staring and connected with his gaze, facade unravelling. A small, cloudy smile graced his features, and Sapnap preened at the sight of it.

So fucking cute.

Sapnap broke the stare when his cheeks were at risk of colouring visibly from the exchange. That didn’t stop the way his face attempted to mirror Karl’s, smiling diffidently.

In an attempt to quell the choking warmth that rose in his chest, Sapnap made a point of assembling his burrito. At some point between cooking the eggs in a pan and adding a final portion of barbecue sauce to the tortilla, Sapnap and Karl had turned it into a competitive event, both rushing to be the first to toast their wraps in the sandwich press.

Sapnap won, but only because—according to Karl—he prioritised speed at the expense of presentation. It was somewhat true, if the fact that Sapnap’s burrito was leaking sauce where he’d piss-poorly folded it was anything to go by. Karl’s, on the other hand, had been visibly given more time and care, each end tucked neatly into itself, and, most significantly, not leaking any sauce.

Karl lifted the lid of the sandwich press after allowing a couple minutes of ample toasting, and immediately barked out peels of boisterous laughter at the spectacle.

“Yours is so *bad*. It’s bad! It’s bleeding!” The blond exclaimed, gesticulating to the puddle of sauce surrounding Sapnap’s rather rough-looking burrito.

“Shut the fuck up dude, you’re just trying to distract me from the fact that you’re *slow*.” Sapnap simpered, picking up his breakfast and messily flopping it onto his plate, trail of sauce distinguishing its path.

“You’re actually bad. You’re dog water.” Karl settled his own on his plate, flicking the switch for the press. Sapnap pretended that watching the way your best friend’s jumper rode up a little as they leaned over a counter was a justifiably platonic thing to do, and absolutely did not entertain the idea of kissing Karl in the company of his cockblocking toaster.

Sapnap’s stomach hollowed with hunger, and he eagerly took the distraction to turn around, leaning back against the counter and shovelling crispy tortilla into his mouth. It instantly burned his mouth, and he could taste little other than hot fucking food, but it turned out to be an incredibly effective stalling mechanism.

Karl at least had the reservation to sit down first. He shuffled around the island on the opposite side of the kitchen and cleared some clutter off of a barstool. It was deposited haphazardly onto the counter, and then Karl shoved himself onto the seat.

Sapnap’s mouth had almost been burned numb, but he refused to slow down, and kept eating until he was halfway done, taking a brief pause only to pop his aspirin tablets.

“Sapnap, you’re gonna choke on your food one day. Proper choke. Choke and *die*. Just slow down, jesus.” Karl warned him with lighthearted reprimand, though it sounded more like a statement than a genuine caution.

Sapnap snorted around his mouthful and, as always, didn’t listen. Instead, he went back to mopping

up barbecue sauce with his burrito, and pointedly tried not to think about that moment at 4 AM, breathing the same air as Karl, hot drafts from the glowing toaster licking his jaw.

When Sapnap arrived back at his shared house later that day, prepared to fight off his nosy best friends with nothing but his tough-love attitude, the last thing he'd expected to see appeared before him once he walked through the door.

George was standing by the sink, missing one of the most imperative articles of clothing (his pants), and covered with an assortment of admittedly astonishing bruises—dark marks that disgraced almost the entire column of his neck.

After a lot of startled eye-contact, and an extremely painful, one-sided conversation, Sapnap managed to wrangle out two key bits of information: one, Dream and George had gone home *early* last night. And two, they had most certainly fucked. Oh boy.

Until now, Sapnap had almost been able to pretend he wasn't a third wheel. There went *that* meek, tattered hope. It seemed like no one knew how to make him question his own sanity quite like his two best friends. Sapnap deserved to be paid for the amount of carrying he did in one three-way relationship.

"You're both fucking nimrods, but I'm happy for whatever the fuck this development is supposed to be." Sapnap promised sincerely, and even he couldn't help the way his obvious fondness for the two seeped into his words. Hastily, he ducked out of the kitchen before either of them could notice his creeping smile.

Sapnap messaged Karl later that night, telling him what had happened.

He smiled widely when his friend's texts dropped any sense of structure or finesse that they usually held, because he knew that that was how Karl texted when he was laughing too hard to care. The thought made Sapnap drag a hand over his features, past his dusted cheeks and his enamoured grin, exasperated with himself. He dropped his wrist limply, phone slipping from his hand.

Karl's illuminated messages gazed up at him innocently.

Karl Jacobs had taken the only adult swing on the set, leaving Sapnap to sit shamefully on the wood chip-covered earth a few feet in front of him.

“The cool kid gets the swing,” Karl had crowed gravely, but Sapnap heard the subtle undertone of childlike giddiness in his tone, and decided to let him have his moment.

A cool breeze was gliding gently past the space between them, pushing around a small, lone leaf. Sapnap stared down his phone as he queued another tinny song through his phone’s shitty speakers. Karl had the toe of his Converse jammed into the dirt, absentmindedly rocking himself back and forth, fingers wound tightly around smooth, grimy chains.

“I can’t say I’m surprised, but I’m also just... I don’t know, *surprised*, I guess.” Karl explained complicatedly, eyebrows languidly arching.

Sapnap turned his phone off and placed it down on the mulched ground beside him, muffled music crackling softly as it left the device.

“I know, dude, I know.” He shook his head with a disbelieving laugh. “George is a very private person. I know how hard it is for him to be honest with his feelings. The fact that he even admitted them to *me* was... kind of a shock. Normally he keeps that shit under lock and key.” Sapnap exhaled noisily. “Which Dream and I get, of course... but I’m grateful.” He clarified, words lilting at the end.

Karl stayed quiet, nodding thoughtfully as he stared absently at nothing. Sapnap itched with the want to ask him what he was thinking, but the words stuck to his throat like peanut butter.

A cold, wet drop of rain pelted Sapnap’s cheek, its deposition painting the side of his nose. He glanced up at the blackening sky, blinking hard as another, smaller drop splattered right onto the space between his eyebrows.

Karl noticed the light sprinkles too, retracting a hand from around the swing chain to wipe a stray smudge of water off his face.

Slowly, as though stuck in a dream, the blond tilted his chin and re-wrapped his hand around the weathered metal. His grip was white-knuckled.

“I understand why he’s afraid.” Karl divulged softly, traces of... *something* hinting in what almost sounded like a confession.

Sapnap furrowed his brow, turning the words over. It sounded bizarrely like there was a deeper implication lying just underneath them, but Sapnap couldn’t quite tell. He let them rattle in his brain listlessly, tauntingly—their double meaning just out of his reach.

“I’d be scared, too.” Karl continued finally, voice quavering almost imperceptibly, and Sapnap realised with a jolt that it was *vulnerability* lacing his atypically straightforward friend’s speech.

He didn’t know how to respond, so he opted to reach out with his legs and hook his ankles around Karl’s—his worn-out Reebok’s looking like an indiscernible black mass next to Karl’s white Converse, textured with dirt and grass stains.

Karl’s other shoe unstuck from the ground and curled under Sapnap’s Achilles’ tendon, further complicating the pattern in which their bodies intertwined.

The wind swayed gently through the empty playground. Silence settled over them like a blanket, though despite the loudness of what remained unsaid, the atmosphere felt calm and warm as it wrapped its phantom tendrils around Sapnap, bringing with it a sense of security. The sky had lost almost all of its blue by now, and the rain seemed content in retaining its adagio irregularity for the time being. Sapnap pulled his hood over his head anyway.

Sapnap’s mindfulness was swiftly interrupted by a sudden, airy laugh from Karl.

“*Yellow brick road?*” He questioned with a steady grin, and Sapnap stared at him blankly for a moment, trying to understand.

And then he noticed his phone, still spewing out gritty music, screen newly adorned with two fat pools of rainwater. A surprised chuckle escaped him as the melodic bridge of *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road* drifted towards his ears.

He reached over and brought the device up, wiping the wetness off using his hoodie sleeve, and

turning to face Karl with a beaming grin.

“I guess I ran out of queued songs.” He supplied with a shrug, holding his phone face-up between them.

Karl’s eyes were carefully pinched at the corners by his interminable smile, and Sapnap knew he had to do everything in his power to keep it there.

He extracted his limbs from Karl’s and slowly rose, soft rain increasing its frequency cascading around them.

“What are you doing?” Karl enticed, watching Sapnap in puzzlement.

“Shut the fuck up, it’s *Yellow Brick Road*.” He shot back by way of answering, arms spread out by his sides as the gentle, yet persistent rain finally picked up speed, light sprinkles giving way to cumbersome droplets that embraced him with chilled fingers.

“You look stupid.” Sapnap heard Karl say, but it was contrasted by the movement of the blond, who shifted to stand with him anyway.

Sapnap just bumped up the volume on his phone, the action in no way compensating for the laughable quality, and Karl wheezed out a stuttering laugh, mimicking the brunet’s actions exaggeratedly, throwing his arms out in a movement more reminiscent of a T-pose than anything.

Sapnap knocked his head back with laughter, feeling several indistinct, but overpowering emotions tumble through his chest and tug on his heart as they ran their course. When he refocused on the face in front of him, separated by intermittent streaks of water, he was surprised to see Karl gazing at him with a glowing fondness. Sapnap tried not to allow himself to become fake-deep, but even he couldn’t prevent the traitorous thought that compared Karl’s temperament to the starlight hailing above them—not before it infested his brain, became all he could think of.

The tempest already swirling inside his chest resurfaced tenfold and stole the breath from him. His eyes glued to Karl’s frame as he dropped his arms, hardly breathing, studying the blond’s every tiny movement.

Slowly, like he was wading through sticky maple syrup, Karl reached forward with both hands, and

brushed his fingers along the underside of Sapnap's jaw, curling over his neck. Sapnap couldn't help but be afraid that his own breathing was going to crumble the delicately balanced moment.

But it never did. Karl pressed against him with a surety so characteristic of him, it shouldn't have been so surprising. Yet, as Sapnap felt chapped lips firmly meet with his, he couldn't help the swoop of his stomach. He dropped his arm, allowing the one still holding up his phone to remain suspended in the air.

The kiss was hardly anything exotic, but it felt like rejuvenation, like a breath of fresh air, and Sapnap filled his lungs with it, precipitously desperate for oxygen.

Everything about it was borderline ridiculous, the vocals of Elton John splaying through the static ambiance of rainfall, but considering it was him and Karl, he honestly wouldn't have it any other way.

Sapnap pushed closer incessantly, palm of his free hand flying up to rest on Karl's waist, gripping lightly.

They broke apart when Karl's fingers pushed at Sapnap's hood enough for it to slip off, flopping against his spine as Karl's thumbs pressed into his jawbone.

They stared at each other for a moment as the weight of what they'd just solidified settled prominently in their minds, but Sapnap decided he wasn't going to let them become another Dream and George, and surged back in to recapture Karl's lips a second time.

He had an impression that Karl understood his intentions, hoping that he was successfully conveying *I'm sure*, and *I want this*, predominantly. He wasn't sure which one of them tilted their heads first, but at some point they had deepened their ministrations and made slight use of their teeth and tongues.

The rain, unfortunately, didn't care to ease up for their epiphanic moment, instead pressing with greater petulance against their silhouettes, the faint pitter-patter muffled significantly by soft grass and mulch. They broke apart again, and Sapnap followed the taste of Karl's lips with his own one last time before pulling back fully, taking in the deep ruddy colour of the other's cheekbones, and the gossamer glaze over his eyes.

"Fuck, maybe let's just do this in the car. *Yellow Brick Road*'s over now, anyway." Sapnap

commented in a so-so manner.

Karl snorted and dropped his hands, yanking obnoxiously on Sapnap's hoodie strings before he turned and splashed his way back to the Civic, kicking mud onto his own heels.

Sapnap made an indignant noise of protest and fixed up his hoodie as he chased after Karl, who'd really just tried to abandon him in some nondescript kids' park in the *rain*, after dark.

"Dickhead." He muttered as he climbed into the passenger seat, and Karl—jumper and hair glistening with pearls of water—grinned at him stupidly.

Well. It was maybe a *little* charming. Still stupid, though.

"So... we kissed. About time?" Karl asked like he expected the answer.

Sapnap thought back to six months ago, when he'd first started to look at Karl a little less than what was strictly friendly.

"Yeah. Definitely." He said with a secretive smile. "Karl Jacobs, I really want to go out with you."

Karl shook his head disbelievingly, bringing a hand up to his face to hide his smile. He splayed his pinkie, eyes peeking through the gaps of his fingers. He huffed with incredulous laughter.

"Alright *Sapnap*, go out with me, then. Take me on a date, you wouldn't." Karl challenged, ridiculous, eyes glinting playfully.

Sapnap snorted and shook his head at his—*boyfriend's..?*—antics. "Okay dumbass. Just wait then, you're gonna be *so* embarrassed when you're wrong."

He reached forward and grabbed a handful of Karl's sweater, reconnecting their lips over the console. Karl kissed back immediately, cold fingers outstretched to settle back on Sapnap's jaw.

It ended up taking a lot longer to get home than either anticipated, both incredibly distracted by the

new development to their relationship that meant they could kiss the other freely. They only called for a pause when they realised they could be doing the same thing at Sapnap's house, only way more comfortably.

When they made it home a little later, Sapnap was careful to give Karl exceptional warning before wandering too far into his shared house.

"Alright dude, as far as I know, Dream and George are home at the moment, so just be careful where you look, in case they're— oh." Sapnap stopped and stared at the couch, where said roommates had passed out in each other's arms.

They clearly weren't completely dressed, but Sapnap had quickly learned to appreciate when they at least passed 50% clothed. He felt Karl's presence step into his side, presumably following his gaze.

"Aw, that's pretty cute." Karl offered kindly.

Sapnap wheezed slightly with the effort to contain the volume of his laughter, but privately agreed.

"Yeah, they're nasty. I love the nimrods, though." He relented, and curled his fingers around Karl's, tugging gently for his attention back.

"Come on, let's leave them alone— oh wait," He paused, extracting himself from Karl's side and rushing to the kitchen cupboard. "Food," he explained at Karl's questioning look, quickly grabbing a box of cereal and returning to the blond to usher them down the hallway.

"If we ever get like those two idiots, you have to promise you'll shoot me." Sapnap said, overly serious, as they flopped onto his bed.

Karl's eyebrows rose comically. "Wow, okay. Not gonna lie, I don't think I'll keep that promise, but alright nimrod. How about I just change your wifi password?"

Sapnap's jaw dropped slightly at the blatant threat, somehow far more concerning to him than his own suggestion.

“You’re fucking evil, dude.” He said, but he was grinning as he shoved an arm into the cereal box and crammed the resulting handful into his mouth. “Want to watch anything?” He mumbled around his mouthful.

Karl offered an indifferent sound, and grabbed for the cereal.

“I think it would be pointless ‘cause I know I’d fall asleep right away.” The blond confessed, wriggling on the bed so he was laying against Sapnap’s side, tugging the covers over himself.

Sapnap watched him, and felt his heart swell a little bit.

“Okay,” he chuckled. “Goodnight, nimrod.”

Karl’s body shook with laughter against his frame.

“You say that way too much.” He mumbled into the cotton of Sapnap’s hoodie, voice muffled and bleary with sleepiness.

“I learned from the best.” He explained, but Karl was either too tired, or had already fallen asleep, face pressed against Sapnap’s chest.

The brunet sighed contentedly and wound his arm tighter around the other man, pressing play on a random video from his YouTube homepage, letting the quiet sound filter through the space.

Fuck, life was pretty damn alright.

End Notes

What is it with me and those wrist tendons? I don’t know, but they’re an interesting focal point.

Hope u enjoyed this! I made a point to focus really hard on separating my relationships and

characterisations, because, well, ppl are all so different. Showing that distinction is one of the main drives towards my writing.

Also! I do have an idea for a multi-chapter fic that I think i would really enjoy writing! but I'm very adhd if you hadn't already noticed lmao >:[. I've never completed a long fic before, so I'm really, really hesitant to say it's definitely going happen,, BUT HAVING SAID THAT I really want to give it a go!

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